Modernism
1. A cultural crisis

- The system of Victorian values collapsed: the First World War left the country in a **disillusioned** and **cynical mood**, with a lack of certainties. There was a new interest in the **interior world of the individual**.

- Stability and prosperity belonged only to the **privileged class**.

- The **gap between the younger and older generation** grew wider and wider.

- Even science and religion offered little comfort to the sense of emptiness (Einstein’s theory of relativity). The **new theories about time and the unconscious** radically changed the vision of man and the universe.
2. Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis

Freud created a structural **model of the psyche** where he identified three parts:

- **ID**: The set of instinctual impulses lacking organisation
- **EGO**: The coordinated realistic part
- **SUPER-EGO**: Has a critical and moralising role since it includes the constraints imposed on the individual by society, education and moral laws
3. Effects of Freud’s theory

The effects of Freud’s theories were deep:

- the development of the human mind appeared to be deeply affected by **the subconscious**, which meant that man’s actions could be motivated by **irrational forces**.

- the relationship between parents and children and between the sexes was reconsidered.

- his **method of investigation** of the human mind through the **analysis of dreams** and the concept of **‘free association’** influenced the modern writers.
4. A new concept of time

A new idea of ‘time’ was expressed by the American philosopher William James (1842-1910) and the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941).

Time isn’t considered as a sequence of moments but as a continuous flow from the past to the present and future (stream of consciousness).

distinction between historical time and psychological time
4. Historical vs psychological time

**Historical time**
- External
- Linear
- Measured by the clock

**Psychological time**
- Internal
- Subjective
- Measured by the emotional intensity of a moment
Modernism

5. Modernism

The **new concept of time** and the **new theory of the unconscious** contributed to the development of modernism: a powerful **international movement** which flourished in the 1920s and 30s in Europe and it involved all forms of art (literature, music, visual arts, cinema).

Modernism gave shape to the **modern consciousness**

and expressed the desire to **break with established forms and subjects**

5. Modernism

• The term Modernism refers to the different ways of representing the Modern World.

COMMON FEATURES

• **Experimentation**: intentional distortion of shapes; traditional forms of narration and representation are rejected: artists want to experiment new forms and styles and want to express the workings of the mind and of the unconscious.

• **Fragmentation**: reality seen simultaneously from different points of view, breaking down of limitations in space and time.

• **Subjectivity**: subjective perception of reality. There isn't only one truth.
6. traditional novel vs modernist novel

- readers and writers shared the same values
- omniscient narrator

• Linear plot; events are narrated in chronological order.

- With the loss of values the novelist is in a position of moral and psychological uncertainty
- the reader is put directly into the characters’ minds, following their flow of thoughts, giving more importance to the subjective consciousness.

• Absence of a well-structured plot: events don’t follow a chronological order. Only one day, or a significant moment can tell us more about a character than the narration of his whole life.
6. New techniques of the modernist novel:

New narrative techniques were experimented, because it was impossible to reproduce the complexity of the human mind using traditional techniques.

- Use of the **interior monologue** (verbal expression of the stream-of-consciousness).
- Use of **allusive language** and the development of the multiple association of words.
- Importance given to the ‘**sound**’ of words as conveying ‘the music of ideas’.
- Intensity of the isolated ‘moment’ or ‘image’ to provide a true insight into the nature of things (the “epiphanies” of Joyce or the “moments of being” of Virginia Woolf).
Writers, like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, adopted the **interior monologue** to represent the unspoken activity of the mind.

**INTERIOR MONOLOGUE**
- the verbal expression of a psychic phenomenon

**STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS**
- the psychic phenomenon itself
6. The main features of the interior monologue

- Absence of introductory expressions like ‘he thought, he remembered, he said’, and absence of the rules of punctuation
- The presence of two levels of narration: one external to the character’s mind, the other internal
- The lack of chronological order
- Use of subjective time
- The lack of formal logical order
7. Picasso and Cubism

*Weeping Woman, 1937* by Pablo Picasso
Penrose Collection, London.

**Picasso** was born in Malaga in 1881. He then went to Paris where he came to know the work of Neo-Impressionists, which inspired the works of the “Blue period”. Later, he started the “rose period”, characterized by pinks and reds. After that, he began to develop the Cubist style. He came to know all the various art movements of the period: Expressionism, Cubism and Surrealism: he was influenced by them and he himself influenced the different currents of art.
7. Weeping Woman

**Description:** the painting represents the face of a crying woman, and it expresses her inconsolable pain. She is seen from different perspectives at the same time. The central area of the mouth and the eyes are painted in blue and white and they look like a broken mirror. The mouth appears through the hands that are covering it, as if it was impossible to hide the woman’s pain. She’s wearing an elegant red hat, probably a sign of a happier life in the past. She’s a symbol of the infinite human suffering caused by the war.

In this work of art we can find:

**Experimentation:** Picasso deliberately avoided traditional ways of representation and created new techniques and styles.

**Fragmentation:** Picasso fragmented the image into abstract geometric forms. The woman’s face is seen simultaneously from different points of view (with different moods and atmospheres). The notion of chronological time collapses (the woman is seen at different times).

**Subjectivity:** with his paintings Picasso questioned the idea that there is a true nature of the subject. It makes us aware of different layers of reality, and shows how perception is always partial and subjective. A mental or psychological vision of reality emerges from this composition.